

REVIEW

Of the member of the dissertation council for the dissertation of Serov Yuri Eduardovich on the topic: "Symphonic Works of B. Tishchenko in the Context of Domestic Symphonism Renewal of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century",
submitted for the degree of doctor of art
in the scientific speciality 5.10.3. Arts (musical art)

The dissertation of Yuri Eduardovch Serov is an ambitious undertaking: a global overview of symphonic music by one of the most outstanding Russian composers of the last third of the 20th century, Boris Tishchenko. In Chapters 3-9 of the thesis, the author surveys the entire corpus of works composed for the symphonic orchestra: these are multi-movement symphonies and programmatic *Symphonische Dichtungen*, concertos for solo instruments with orchestra, orchestral pieces with text and voice, ballets, vocal dramatic compositions, music for the theater, and cinematographic sound tracks. In the last chapter of his overarching survey, Serov embraces the late works of the composer for chamber ensembles and for piano solo as well. Serov's correct statement that no monograph exists that covers the music by Tischenko in its entirety clearly declares the innovatory and daring endeavour undertaken by the candidate in the dissertation. This truly monumental study – both in its scope and dimensions – apart from placing symphonic works by Tishchenko withing his own creative development, explores his artistic ideas and ideological tenets that underlying them, as well as compositional techniques, within broad context of the music of leading composers in both Russian capitals in the wake of Khrushchev's "thaw" [оттепель] of the 1960s, when current trends in post-war musical modernism became accessible and were freely appropriated by the young generation of Russian composers of the "new wave."

The thesis is arranged coherently, in chronological and generic order, giving each composition discussed a special angle in such a way that all of them together enable us to follow the stages of Tischenko's creative evolution and his involvement in a variety of current stylistic trends, cultural and ideological agendas, and compositional techniques. The structure of the chapters, divided into sub-chapters and smaller sub-divisions, is clear and logical; the discourse gravitates around each composition, emphasizing its individuality and its place in the entire nexus of adjacent works, and makes it easy for the reader to follow the text. The analysis and mode of discussion of each work is infused with personal emotional involvement and the performative experience of the applicant. Family and the personal proximity of the author to the composer and to the world of his music gives this study its communicative power, openness, and artistic and academic integrity.

As Serov states several times in the course of his text, the time period of the 1960s, “when all the sluices (gateways) were opened”, became favorable for audacious experiments, and the ability to adopt the entire palette of new compositional devices and techniques. His interpretation of Tishchenko’s ideological non-conformism, both academic and personal, is remarkable for its candor. At the same time, the author does not explain the lack of adjustment of Tishchenko’s music solely by his independent position vis-à-vis the political regime and the ideological climate, or by his deliberate collaboration with banned writers, poets, choreographers, which caused his major works to remain “on shelves” for years and even decades, causing Tishchenko to become, to use his apt expression, “a non-timely composer” (несвоевременный). Serov frequently observes that the reasons for the brief scenic life of some of Tishchenko’s works spread far beyond his recalcitrance, mentioning the unbearable dimensions and performing complexity of his central compositions.

Serov narrates the progressive choice of a whole variety of techniques and compositional models in Tishchenko’s works; he valiantly calls things by their name, putting any restrictions or taboos aside. The true highlight, in my view, is his discussion of the interrelationship between music and literature (both in the music of Tishchenko and his colleagues Slonimsky, Schnittke, Gubaidullina, Falick, and others). Here the researcher demonstrates outstanding erudition and perceptiveness in his grasp of worldwide and national prose and poetry; the parallels he draws between Tishchenko’s literary sources and their musical renditions are original and thought-provoking. Appendix no. 4 is very helpful in this respect: it collates all the poetic and prosaic texts in compositions discussed in the main body of the work. Among the best are Serov’s comparison between the Akhmatova’s original and the composer’s Requiem (supported by Appendix no. 5) and his reading of Dante in the choreographic mega-symphony (хорео-симфоническая циклиада) *Beatrice*. The applicant’s fresh and humorous analysis of the sonorous complementation of Tchukovsky’s concise texts in the children’s trilogy ballet – opera – operetta (on pp. 252-263) should be mentioned as well. An “earlier unexplored synthesis of music, text, and choreography” (pp. 516, 519), examined in Tishchenko’s ballet on Blok’s poem “The Twelve”, should be considered another successful point of this study (pp. 238-242).

Yury Serov provides convincing and bold interpretations of the semiotic complexity of the music of Tishchenko; his explanation of its real (or suggested) stage imagery, its numerical symbolism, and its multi-layer semantic are convincing and bold. Here, his use of personal contacts with the composer and additional artists, his reference to a corpus of interviews, memoirs, testimonies, and other *belles-lettres* genres are more than

pertinent. The author invigorates Tishchenko's personal reflection on social and political cataclysms (p. 572), his occupation with global ethical values and human dilemmas, embodied in his musical dramaturgy through extreme emotional intensity and thematic transformations; and he finds ways to link his meta parodies and various allusions (p. 573) to the conceptions of the works analysed. Serov aims to embrace works of different periods and genres and emphasize the harmonious unity of the composer's creative agenda (p. 574).

The analysis of the musical score *per se* concentrates on the structural and timbral components, general characteristics of musical language and pitch structures, compositional techniques used, notation, and the topical universe of its thematic material. Here, Tishchenko's non-dogmatic language and an absence of technical radicalism are demonstrated on various levels. Analytical portions are supported with around 350 musical examples of symphonic scores. A palette of vanguard techniques and their combinations and modifications, instrumental timbre, texture, and notation are thoroughly discussed. Serov traces inspirations that originate in the music of Monteverdi and the concerto grosso tradition, Beethoven and Schubert, Mahler and Penderecki, Rimsky-Korsakov and Shostakovich, Weinberg and Ustvol'skaya, folklore, the Japanese gagaku, the music of the Tibetan peoples, etc.

The broad and comprehensive background for Tishchenko's music is outlined in Chapters 1-2, 4.1, and 6.1, via parallel trends in the music of his teachers and senior colleagues – D. Shostakovich, G. Ustvol'skaya, and M. Weinberg; and of the 1960s generation: S. Slonimsky, A. Schnittke, S. Gubaidullina, E. Denisov, R. Schedrin, L. Prigozhin, Y. Falick. Pertinent to the discussion, works of these composers are explored in light of concurrency or opposition to the main protagonist's symphonic quests. This perspective enables the outlining of the harmonious integrity of Tishchenko's music. The author provides broad perspectives of Tishchenko's adherence to the St. Peterburg compositional school (p. 616) as one of the pivotal characteristics of his position as an artist.

The dissertation strongly benefits from Serov's expression that is far from the bureaucratized, quasi-scientific language of many academic opuses; the narrative flows smoothly, due to its vivid, metaphor-laden, and sometimes informal language.

My criticism expressed below in constructive and collegial spirit, relates to the following main points:

1. Repeated statements, that appear either verbatim or rephrased, are inevitable in such an expansive study. They are notable on the level of separate sentences, paragraphs, and some

footnotes. What is absolutely redundant, in my view, is the long and exhaustive chapter on Conclusions that contains exact citations of whole paragraphs from the previous chapters – instead of an expected brief summary. Such repetitions mar the generally very good impression of this text.

2. The quality of the English translation of the dissertation is unidiomatic and could hardly be comprehended by a native-language reader. And this is a shame, since portions of the dissertation truly deserve to be published in English in high-ranking academic periodicals. It will suffice to look at the title: “Symphonic Works of B. Tishchenko in the Context of Domestic Symphonism Renewal of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century”: the word “domestic” has a negative connotation of “local, parochial” and is actually an antithesis to the lofty term “отечественный” (that should be translated as “national”). The term “Symphonism” does not exist in the English-language musicological lexicon; it could be translated as “Method of symphonic development.” Grammatical structures should appear in a more genuine vein. My criticism comes from my firm belief that the text (in excerpts, of course) deserves and should find its way to a global (and not just “domestic”!) audience.

3. The essence of the “new wave” is demonstrated as a susceptibility of Russian symphonic composers (supported by the change in political and ideological climate) of Western modernism. The reader is lacking some perspective, even in passing, of what is going on concurrently on the other side of the Iron Curtain (for instance, some reference to aleatoric compositions by Boulez, Lutoslawski, etc.).

4. No bibliography in foreign languages is attached (apart from Volkov’s *Testimony*).

I read Y. Serov’s text with true interest and pleasure. His dissertation fills a significant gap in both the overall research on the sonorous and intellectual heritage of Boris Ivanovich Tishchenko, and by the same token, in the retrospective comprehension of the symphonic music of his period (further extending the seminal *Symphonic inquiries* and other studies by Aranovsky). The author’s approach to the material is innovative, original, and challenging. The thesis demonstrates intellectual strength and the ability of its author to arrive at bold and significant conclusions. His argument is rhetorically convincing and thought provoking. I would like to emphasize especially the high literary quality of his prose and editorial level: there are almost no errors and slips. Most of all – it attracts with its integrity and honesty.

I would like to congratulate the author on this major achievement and wish him success in continuing to promote Tishchenko's music via future performances, recordings, and writings.

The dissertation of Serov Yuri Eduardovich on the topic "Symphonic Works of B. Tischchenko in the Context of Domestic Symphonism Renewal of the Second Half of the Twentieth Century" meets the basic requirements established by Order No.11181/1 dd. 19.11.2021 "On the procedure for awarding academic degrees at St. Petersburg State University". The applicant – Serov Yuri Eduardovich – **entirely deserves to be awarded the academic degree of doctor of art (musical art)** sciences in the scientific speciality 5.10.3.

No violations of paragraphs 9 and 11 of the specified Order have been detected.

Date 17.05.2023

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To whom is my concern

Confirmation

This is to confirm, that the signature bellow is consistent with the official signature of Prof Bella Brover-Lubovsky in our records.

Prof Bella Brover –Lubovsky

Signature

Best regards,

Sarah Meltzer

Head of the President's Office

